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BRACE FOR AN UNUSUALLY HOT FEBRUARY WITH LITTLE RAIN: IMD

Most parts of India are expected to experience above-normal temperatures and below-normal rainfall in February, the IMD said on Friday

IMPACT ON CROPS AND ADVISORY FOR FARMERS

The hot and dry weather conditions may cause premature bud break and early flowering in apple and stone fruits. Wheat crops at the flowering and grain filling stages may experience significant adverse impacts, while mustard and chickpea are likely to experience early maturity. The IMD advised farmers to use intermittent light irrigation to prevent crop loss

4.5 MM RAIN IN JANUARY CAUSE FOR CONCERN

- The country's mean temperature in January was 18.98 degrees Celsius, the third highest for the month in more than a 100 years
- India received an average of 4.5 mm of rainfall in January, making it the fourth lowest since 1901 and the third lowest since 2001, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday | P9

1901

JANUARY 2025 WAS THE THIRD WARMEST IN 124 YEARS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

STATE OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY

CHALLENGES
Geopolitical, trade uncertainties, and commodity price shocks could upset growth projections

GROWTH

FY25 Real GDP projected to grow by **6.4%**
Agriculture and services pushed growth in first half of FY25

FY26 India to grow in the range of **6.3%** and **6.8%**. If exports pick up, add another **0.5%** to **1%** growth

2047 GOAL India needs to grow at 8% for 20 years to become a developed nation by 2047. Also, investment rate must rise to 35% of GDP, up from 31% now

INFLATION

Retail inflation softened from **5.4%** in FY24 to **4.9%** in April–December 2024

However, food inflation shot up from **7.5%** in FY24 to **8.4%** in FY25 (April–December)

Overall, the risk to inflation from increases in commodity prices seems limited in FY26

FOREX

$634.6 bn as on Jan 3, 2025

$616.7 bn as on January 31, 2024

90% The forex reserves are sufficient to cover 90% of India's external debt

ECONOMIC SURVEY 2024-25

GET OUT OF THE WAY OF GROWTH, SAYS SURVEY

> 'Getting out of the way' and allowing businesses to focus on their core mission is a significant contribution that governments around the country can make to foster innovation and [illegible]

V Anantha Nageswaran, CEA

The 'business as usual' attitude will lead to growth stagnation, warns the Economic Survey

Real income in FY24 less than FY18 levels

The real monthly income of male salaried workers was 6.4% lower in FY24 compared to FY18, the Economic Survey said citing Periodic Labour Force Survey data. For female workers, the inflation-adjusted monthly pay was 12.5% lower in FY24 compared to FY18

Long work, junk food may hit mental health

Cautioning against putting in long work hours, the Survey flagged the adverse health effects. It said people who spend 12 hours at desk have struggling levels of mental well-being. The Survey also noted that individuals who rarely consume ultra-processed or packaged junk food have better mental well-being than those who regularly do

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

INDIA's economy is powering down due to multiple factors—both domestic and global—and the 'business as usual' approach would only lead to growth stagnation. This is the clear message from the Economic Survey 2024-25, tabled in Parliament on Friday.

Presented a day before the Budget, the Survey illustrates the challenges India has to surmount to meet the ambitious target of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

To realise the Viksit Bharat dream, the country needs to grow at a high rate of 8% for the next two decades—a challenging task given that the growth forecasts for FY25 and FY26 are less than 7%. The Survey expects FY26 growth to be within a range of 6.3% and 6.8%, which is in line with the prediction of many national and international agencies.

"To achieve the target of Viksit Bharat by 2047, India needs to grow at a nominal rate of 10% in dollar terms," Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said in a press briefing on Friday.

The Survey calls for an overhaul in approach to achieve the target. Its prescription for growth includes deregulation, augmenting internal capabilities, and shedding the business-as-usual approach.

It advocates the need to improve India's global competitiveness through grassroots-level structural reforms and deregulation.

The Survey, which had last year advocated for better collaboration with China for giving a boost to the manufacturing sector, sings a different tune this year as it identifies the neighbouring country posing the 'single-source concentration risk'. It says India depends on China for several products, which exposes it to potential supply chain disruptions, price fluctuations and currency risks.

Wading into the debate over long working hours, the Survey warns companies against making their employees spend long hours at work. "Individuals who spend 12 or more hours at a desk have distressed/struggling levels of mental well-being, with a mental well-being score approximately 100 points lower than those who spend less than or equal to two hours at a desk," it says citing the Sapien Labs Centre for the Human Brain and Mind study.

Like in the previous year, the Survey has once again red-flagged excessive financialisation of the Indian economy. It says the financial markets must grow in line with the real economy and not faster than the economy's capital needs and overall economic growth.

Amid the noise over artificial intelligence, the Survey says companies need to use AI with sensitivity. P13

First in 10 yrs, no foreign bid to stoke pre-session row: PM

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

IN a rather sharp remark, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that for the first time since 2014, no foreign attempts were made this year to stoke trouble before the start of a Parliament session. He was speaking to journalists ahead of the start of the Budget session on the premises of Parliament.

"*Shayad 2014 se lekar ab tak, ye pehla* Parliament *ka satr hai, ki jiske ek-do din pehle koi videshi chingari nahi pakdi hai, videsh mein se aag lagane ki koshish nahi hui hai* (Perhaps since 2014, this is the first session of Parliament in which a day or two before the session, there has been no foreign attempt to stoke a fire from abroad)," Modi said. He did not elaborate.

FIRST DAY, FIRST SHOW

> I hope that we will live up to the hopes and aspirations of the country in this budget session of Parliament

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

With the NDA government tabling its first full-fledged budget in its third term on February 1, Modi invoked Goddess Lakshmi and said he prayed that the goddess of wealth blesses the people of the country with prosperity and success. "The people of the country have given me this responsibility for the third time, and this is the first full budget of our third term. Many important decisions will be taken in the current budget session. I can confidently say that in 2047 when the country will celebrate 100 years of Independence, the resolution of a developed India that the country has taken will create a new confidence and infuse a new energy."

Reaffirming his commitment to development, Modi said his government is moving in a mission mode for all-round progress. "In the third term, we are moving ahead towards all-round development of the country ... innovation, inclusion and investment have constantly been the basis of the roadmap of our economic activity," he said.

SONIA'S REMARK ON PREZ SPARKS CONTROVERSY

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR AND PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

CONGRESS leader Sonia Gandhi's comments about the hour-long address of President Droupadi Murmu to Parliament on Friday gave the BJP ammunition to launch a scathing attack on the grand old party.

"The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end... she could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia was heard saying in a viral video on social media.

While Rashtrapati Bhavan said they were in "poor taste, unfortunate and unacceptable," Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the 'royal family' of the Congress of insulting the President, who hails from a tribal background. BJP president J P Nadda termed Sonia "poor thing" phrase "deeply disrespectful" and indicative of the opposition's feudal mindset and disregard for the dignity of the highest Constitutional office.

> The President was not tired at any point. Indeed, she has believed that speaking up for the marginalised communities ... can never be tiring

Rashtrapati Bhavan

However, the Congress defended the remarks saying every Indian respects the President and accused the BJP of being unable to accept Sonia's empathy for Murmu's health. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said that BJP and the media were twisting her statement. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said: "My mother is a 78-year-old lady, she has simply said that 'the President read such a long speech and she must have been tired, poor thing'. She fully respects the President of India."

Message to Trump: No de-dollarisation policy

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA on Friday reaffirmed that de-dollarisation is neither its policy nor strategy, after President Donald Trump warned BRICS nations against replacing the US dollar as a reserve currency, reiterating a threat of 100% tariffs he made weeks after his November election victory.

"On de-dollarisation, External Affairs Ministry has made it clear that we don't have any policy or strategy in this regard," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Reiterating his early statement on the issue, Trump had posted on Truth Social on Thursday: "We are going to require a commitment from these seemingly hostile countries that they will neither create a new BRICS currency, nor back any other currency to replace the US dollar or, they will face 100% tariffs." BRICS group of countries including India, China and Russia account for 40 per cent of global population and an estimated one-third of global GDP.

DON's OPEN THREAT

Trump has consistently opposed de-dollarisation and any manoeuvres to undermine the dollar. "The idea that BRICS is trying to move away from the Dollar, while we stand by and watch, is over," Trump said.

Although the BRICS countries have explored the idea of an alternative currency, the idea remains far from realisation as unlike other grouping such as the European Union, they lack a common market or unified trade policy. In the last summit of the grouping, BRICS countries, however, had stressed on the need for trade in local currencies and smooth cross-border payments.

CM slams Oppn over MUDA

'THEIR BID TO DENT MY IMAGE WILL FAIL'

Siddaramaiah said efforts are being made by Opposition to target him. He said MUDA case is being probed by Lokayukta police and does not attract PMLA provisions | P6

INDIA SEALS SERIES

Team India celebrates the wicket of England batter Jos Buttler during the fourth T20 cricket match against England in Pune on Friday. India defeated England by 15 runs to seal the series 3-1. India scored 181/9 in 20 overs & England were all out for 166 | P11

K'taka implements patient's right to die with dignity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE state government has issued an order to implement the Supreme Court's directive for a patient's right to die with dignity by withdrawing or withholding life-sustaining treatment. This is for patients on long-term treatment with no hope of improvement, or for those in a vegetative state, where medical treatment would only harm them.

Karnataka is the second state after Kerala to implement this ruling. The state government has also come out with an Advanced Medical Directive (AMD) or a living will, in which a patient can record his/her wish regarding medical treatment in future. In the order issued on Thursday, the health department appointed medical experts to the Secondary Medical Board to decide when life-sustaining treatment can be stopped for terminally-ill patients.

Under the new order, any neurologist, neurosurgeon, surgeon, anaesthetist, or intensivist approved to certify brainstem death under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, can be appointed to the board. District health officers (DHOs) across Karnataka will automatically recognise these experts for this role. P3

KOPPAL SHOCKER

7,000 SSLC students learning ABCD..., 'Aa Aaa, Ee, Eee' now

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Koppal

THOUSANDS of schoolchildren in Koppal district do not know to read and write Kannada. This came to light when officials of the education department visited some government schools in the district a few months ago.

The officials took the matter seriously and raised it during a meeting convened to discuss ways to improve SSLC results in the district recently.

MLC Hemalatha Nayak stated that according to a survey, 7,000 SSLC students can't read and write Kannada and English. Their parents are worried as the timetable for the SSLC examination has been released.

With this being the situation, teachers have started teaching ABCD... and "Aa Aaa, Ee, Eee" to students and are preparing them for the SSLC examination.

In rural areas, parents do not send their children to schools as most of them are daily wage workers or vegetable sellers. They take their children along with them to workplaces. Many such children, who have been forcibly admitted to government schools by teachers, don't attend classes regularly. P3

GOOD NEWS...

'Tiger-occupied area increased by 30% in 20 yrs'

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

NOT only the number of tigers, but also the area occupied by them has increased in the country, according to a study.

The study, 'Tiger recovery amid people and poverty', published in the journal, Science, released on Friday stated that the tiger-occupied area increased by 30% in the last two decades. The study stated that tigers are now using forest interiors as breeding spaces and are expanding their territory.

The area occupied by them has increased annually at the pace of 2,929 sqkm. "This is the largest global population occupation, of around 1,38,200 sqkm," said the study adding that tigers persistently continued to occupy human-free and prey-rich protected areas and at the same time colonised proximal connected habitats that are shared with around 60 million people.

The study stated that the highest occupancy was recorded in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra. Interestingly, the

2023 tiger estimate report released in 2023, showed a rise in tiger numbers in these states compared to 2018. The study said, "Tigers became extinct or were absent from areas with a legacy of extensive bushmeat consumption or commercial poaching, even when human density was relatively low (such as in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Northeastern states and Southeast Asia)."

Yadvendradev Jhala from Wildlife Institute of India and co-author of the study, said, "Tiger-occupied areas increased in states showing prosperity when compared to states where there is poverty and high armed conflict. Though forest areas have not increased, the area occupied by tigers has increased. They have expanded their range and in today's time, around 40% of tigers live in areas close to human habitation."